

Abstract of the Disclosure:

[0025] Surgical instruments and procedures promote placement of a tissue-ablating probe surrounding the left and right pulmonary veins within the intrapericardial space of a patient's heart via access through a subxiphoid or subcostal entry incision. An opening is formed in the pericardium near the apex region of the heart to facilitate formation of openings through three pericardial reflections by which a tissue-ablating probe is positioned around the pulmonary veins.